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Universal but not truly 'global': governmentality, economic liberalism, and the international

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Abstract. This article responds to issues raised about global governmentality studies by Jan Selby, Jonathan Joseph, and David Chandler, especially regarding the implications of 'scaling up' a concept originally designed to describe the politics of advanced liberal societies to the international realm. In response to these charges, I argue that critics have failed to take full stock of Foucault's contribution to the study of global liberalism, which owes more to economic than political liberalism. Taking Foucault's economic liberalism seriously, that is, shifting the focus from questions of natural rights, legitimate rule, and territorial security to matters of government, population management, and human betterment reveals how liberalism operates as a universal, albeit not yet global, measure of truth, best illustrated by the workings of global capital. While a lot more translation work (both empirical and conceptual) is needed before governmentality can be convincingly extended to global politics, Foucauldian approaches promise to add a historically rich and empirically grounded dimension to IR scholarship that should not be hampered by disciplinary admonitions.

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The work of Michel Foucault is by no means a novelty in International Relations (IR). It was first popularised during the 1980s and 1990s when people like R. B. J. Walker, Richard Ashley, Jim George, Spike Peterson, and Jens Bartelson began revealing how many of the *realpolitische* staples of IR, like 'anarchy', 'sovereignty', 'state', and 'power struggles', not so much describe as produce (and police) our understanding of what counts as global politics.[1] These so-called 'dissident' scholars were the first to use Foucault (but also Derrida, Agamben, Said, Spivak, Bhabha) to denaturalise the disciplinarity of the field and critique its obsession with liberal-Enlightenment traditions. More recently, however, a different Foucault has entered

* I borrow the phrase 'universal but not truly "global"' from Anna Agathangelou, 'Bodies of Desire, Terror and the War in Eurasia: Impolite Disruptions of (Neo)Liberal Internationalism, Neoconservatism and the "New" Imperium', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38:3 (2010), p. 5. I would like to thank Mark Salter for inviting me to present a first draft of this article at the European Consortium for Political Research conference in Stockholm, September 2010. I am also grateful for the thorough comments and suggestions received from the anonymous reviews of the *RIS* on earlier versions of this article. This research was made possible with generous support from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany.

[1] Jan Selby, 'Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucauldian IR', *International Relations*, 21:3 (2007), p. 326.

the discipline. Since the translation and publication of his latest Collège de France lectures, *Society Must Be Defended*, *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*,[2] Foucault's reputation in IR has changed from that of a general 'theoretical historian',[3] which questions and rearranges our traditional ways of producing knowledge to that of a historian of the present, rewriting the rationality of our contemporary condition. We have traded in the Foucault of discourse analysis and the archivist of early modern disciplinary programmes for a thinker who does not shy away from making a 'foray in the field of contemporary history'.[4] Especially with Foucault's much discussed return to questions of the state and sovereign power in the later lectures,[5] his writings seem to have a direct bearing upon the field of IR, particularly for scholars looking to distance themselves from the statist ontology of realist and liberal-institutional theories. I am referring here specifically to critical (bio)security studies, which set out to identify the militaristic as well as molecular strategies used to define 'what life is and what it is for', and the burgeoning subfield of International Political Sociology (IPS) and to some extent also critical/cultural International Political Economy (IPE), both of which are interested in how power orders the more quotidian aspects of our lives.[6] None of these approaches have been spared criticism, which is why the present article seeks to clarify and unpack some aspects of what has come to be known as the global governmentality debate.

In what follows, I review and respond to the three charges raised recently against the usefulness of Foucault in International Relations by Jan Selby, David Chandler, and Jonathan Joseph:[7] (1) the argument that it is methodologically inappropriate to 'scale up' concepts which Foucault designed for the analysis of individual and societal processes to the international sphere; (2) the critique that Foucault's theories of governmentality apply only to the Western world; in parts of the world that lack the basic preconditions for liberalism, governmentality 'reverts back to something more basic' – what Foucault calls 'disciplinary power';[8] and (3) finally, the idea that Foucauldian readings of the international exaggerate both the unity and the naturalism of the global disregarding the continued importance of national interests, power struggles, violence and imperialism. Although

[2] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977–1978* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2008).

[3] Andrew Neal, 'Goodbye War on Terror? Foucault and Butler on Discourses of Law, War and Exceptionalism', in M. Dillon and A. Neal (eds), *Foucault on Politics, Security and War* (London: Palgrave, 2008), p. 540.

[4] Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, dust jacket.

[5] Stephen Collier, 'Topologies of Power: Foucault's Analysis of Political Government beyond "Governmentality"', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26:6 (2009), pp. 78–108.

[6] Michael Merlingen, 'Monster Studies', *International Political Sociology*, 3:2 (2008), p. 273; Nicholas J. Kiersey and Jason Weidner, 'Editorial Introduction', *Global Society*, 23:4 (2009), p. 354.

[7] Selby, 'Engaging Foucault'; David Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism? The Limits of the Biopolitical Approach', *International Political Sociology*, 3:1 (2009), pp. 53–70; David Chandler, 'Globalising Foucault: Turning Critique into Apologia – A Response to Kiersey and Rosenow', *Global Society*, 24:2 (2010), pp. 135–42; Jonathan Joseph, 'Governmentality of What? Populations, States and International Organizations', *Global Society*, 23:4 (2009), pp. 413–27; Jonathan Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality: Social Theory and the International', in *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:2 (2010a), pp. 223–46; Jonathan Joseph, 'What Can Governmentality Do for IR?', *International Political Sociology*, 2:4 (2010b), pp. 202–4.

[8] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 225.

these charges offer important correctives to Foucauldian applications in IR, they fail to take full stock of Foucault's contribution to the study of global liberalism, which owes more to the economic liberalism of Hume, Smith, Ricardo, and James and Stuart Mill but also German Ordoliberals and the Chicago school of economics than to the political liberalism of Kant, Hobbes, and Rousseau dominant in much IR.[9] Taking Foucault's economic liberalism seriously, that is, shifting the focus from questions of natural rights, legitimate rule, and territorial security to matters of government, population management, and human betterment will not only help IR scholars transcend their proverbial statist ontology, it also promises to reveal the material, cultural, and cognitive elements that allow liberalism to operate as 'principally a *civilizational* project'[10] with universal, albeit not yet global, reach.

The argument is structured in three parts. The first section reviews and responds to critiques raised by Selby, Chandler, and Joseph. It shows how Foucault's redefinition of power and governmentality bypasses the binaries (inside/outside, domestic/international, micro/macro-levels) and abstractions (state, sovereignty, the international, global civil society) foundational to IR, and avoids many of the problems the French thinker is usually charged with. The second section takes up the conceptual confusion that lies at the heart of this debate between liberal and economic liberalism. Closer attention to the latter demonstrates that liberalism harbours a universal imagination despite the global being an uneven and fractured space, and supports the case for global governmentality studies in International Relations. The concluding section provides a brief overview of Foucault's contributions to the discipline, particularly for launching a more empirically grounded and politically responsible research agenda, all the while keeping in mind that Foucault is better used to interrogate our loyalty to disciplinary knowledge than to refurbish its vestiges.

The limits of governmentality

Broadly speaking, governmentality refers to a philosophy of rule that started in the sixteenth and culminated in the eighteenth century, eventually bringing about a radical reorientation in the rationality and practice of Western politics. Intimately tied to the history of liberalism, governmentality takes the population, as opposed to the state, as the object and target of government and political economy as the principle in the name of which government should be organised and eventually limited. The *raison d'être* of modern government becomes less a matter of securing the integrity and lawfulness of a territory than about ordering the economic and political relations of the social to improve the welfare, health, and productivity of the population.[11] Different from the medieval rationality of power, where the legitimacy of sovereign power derived from a cosmo-theological framework and distinct from the *raison d'état* logic where sovereignty was measured in terms of

[9] Scott G. Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[10] Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'In the Shadows of Globalization: Civilizational Crisis, the "Global Modern" and "Islamic Nihilism"', *Globalizations*, 7:1–2 (2010b), p. 180.
[11] Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87–104.

territorial and material gain, the liberal doctrine defines government as the ability to know, map, and affect the conduct of the body politic in its entire spatial dispersion.[12]

While early attempts to implement this new 'art of government'[13] sought to micro-manage the conduct of the populace through disciplinary means, such as police and mercantilist regulation, by the eighteenth century population growth and a complex network of socio-economic affairs were making it increasingly difficult for centralised power to know and manage the conduct of the entire populace. The liberal solution was to have government delegate some of its original responsibilities to non-state agencies of power, communities and even households and, with the help of bio-power, 'affect the way in which individuals conduct themselves'[14] without violating their rights and freedoms. Liberal theory, being at the same time a political model for legitimate rule and individual freedom, and an economic theory of free market relations, introduced a fundamental tension between the multiplicity of economic subjects and the totalising logic of sovereign power. To resolve or, at least, relax this tension sovereign power had to operate 'at a distance' – it had to sacrifice its unitary and prohibitive style of rule for less hierarchical and more subtle technologies.[15] Traces of this logic are visible even today when the job of governmentality is to extend a flexible entrepreneurial ethos across the entire social field in order to maintain the steering capacity of the state more or less intact. To govern, then, for Foucault, is not to rule over others, but 'to structure the possible field of action of others' in ways congruent with the disciplinary injunctions of juridical power yet not fully dependent upon its direct intervention.[16]

There are three distinct charges brought against this redefinition of government and its applications in international studies. The most basic one, raised by Jan Selby, argues that Foucault's approach to power is too microscopic (it is concerned mostly with societal processes and individuation practices) to tell us anything significant about the macro-level processes International Relations is interested in.[17] 'A theorist whose focus was primarily the ''domestic'' social arena' cannot be used to

[12] This is not to say that governmentality is separate from or subsequent to sovereign power and its reliance on law, consensus and force, but rather a *reconfiguration* of sovereign power: they exist side by side, circulating in and out of each other. As John Protevi explains in 'What Does Foucault Think is New About Neo-Liberalism?', John Protevi's website {http://www.protevi.com/john/Foucault_28June2009.pdf} (accessed 28 June 2009) the present moment consists of a succession of various rationalities of government: the medieval 'cosmo-theological framework', where the responsibility of the sovereign is to guarantee the salvation of the people by acting in accordance to natural, cosmic and divine law; seventeenth-eighteenth century *raison d'état*, where the prince has to secure the growth and survival of the state through various means of discipline, such as police, mercantilist regulation and inter-state stability; nineteenth century physiocracy and classic liberalism, which introduce political economy as a science to both limit the power of government and ensure the growth and prosperity of the population; and, finally, twentieth century neoliberalism, where the state intervenes in the social fabric to secure the smooth functioning of an artificial and fragile market. This progression must not be understood in the strict, linear sense. The present rationality of government is in many ways a principle for developing, perfecting, and strengthening moments past, in Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 29.

[13] Foucault, 'Governmentality', p. 97.

[14] Graham Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', in A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 20.

[15] John Protevi, 'What Does Foucault Think is New About Neo-Liberalism?'

[16] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in J. D. Faubion (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984* (New York: The New Press, 2001), p. 341.

[17] Mathias Albert and Peter Lenco, 'Introduction to the Forum – Foucault and International Political Sociology', *International Political Sociology*, 2:3 (2008), p. 256.

study the international because there is an 'ontological gulf' between the two.[18] While it is correct that Foucault showed little interest for the state system or inter-state relations, the level of analysis problem raised by Selby says more about IR's own ontological purism than about the impossibility of using Foucault for the study of global politics.

Foucault's regicidal ambitions represent a heretic affront to the juridico-institutional concept of power used in political science, economics, and history.[19] Instead of focusing on the 'who' of power (Who can exercise it and against whom? What legitimises power? What principles define the threshold of that legitimacy?), like IR does, Foucault preferred to study the way in which power is exercised in action. He was interested neither in domestic nor in international politics, neither in liberal nor in developing states. He plainly refused to accept sovereign power as the tacit common sense that informs all of these hierarchical distinctions:[20] 'The analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions or even to the study of all those institutions that would merit the name ''political''.[21] 'Power, in the substantive sense, ''le pouvoir'' doesn't exist',[22] Foucault famously declared, it only gains temporal permanence and spatial corporeality through human (inter)action.

Foucault encourages us to trace the organisation and circulation of power through the entire social field rather than start our analysis from *a priori* objects like states, nations, or institutions. This much more empirical and grounded method will, at times, lead us to institutions, policy programmes, and diplomatic agreements, other times, it will point to scientific discoveries, architectural designs, and other more mundane and inconspicuous practices. Either way, power cannot be reduced to the classic terms of social theory (systems, structures, and apparatuses). Neither can it be localised at the micro-, meso-, or macro-level because these sites are not 'in and of [themselves] *necessarily* real'[23] so much as conceptual categories meant to help IR (as well as other disciplines) guard its conceptual territory (states, nations, institutions, policies, civil society, etc.) and epistemic security.[24] As such, we need not shy away from abandoning these heuristic devices should the erratic and elusive 'economy' of power relations take us into different directions. Perhaps leaving the master-category of the sovereign state aside for a moment could help us finally overcome the common tendency to view the national and the global as two separate and mutually exclusive sites tied in a zero-sum game. We could then move towards combining international and domestic politics, military, and parliamentary processes, international security and political economy or address questions of sociality and

[18] Selby, 'Engaging Foucault', pp. 325, 332; Joseph, 'Governmentality of What', p. 414.
[19] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 327.
[20] R. B. J. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Mustapaha Kamal Pasha, 'Disciplining Foucault', *International Political Sociology*, 2:4 (2010a), pp. 213–15.
[21] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 344.
[22] Michel Foucault, 'The Confession of the Flesh', in C. Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 198.
[23] Nicholas J. Kiersey, Jason R. Weidner, and Doerthe Rosenow, 'Response to Chandler', *Global Society*, 24:2 (2010), p. 146, emphasis in original.
[24] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); J. Marshall Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places: Indigeneity, Cosmology and the Limits of International Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).

subjectivity in ways that are more attuned to the complex political realities we inhabit.[25] This is a topic I shall have more to say about in the conclusion.

A much more serious charge argues that Foucault's notion of governmentality does not apply to developed and developing countries alike. Because Foucauldian scholars have focused too heavily on the general operation of governmental techniques and not sufficiently on the specific conditions that make governmentality work in some instances and not others, governmentality studies suggest a universal constant that is too global or complete to permit empirical investigation.[26] Using a 'Marxist social ontology',[27] Selby and Joseph remind us that the strategies and technologies of liberal government are 'much more unevenly distributed' than global governmentality studies would suggest.[28] Joseph rightfully explains that '[t]he uneven nature of the international means that techniques developed in one part of the world may unsuccessfully be applied in a different part of the world. Unevenness also suggests that states coexist in hierarchical power relations',[29] which makes certain states susceptible to foreign intervention or influence, be it in the form of IMF structural adjustments plans, 'good governance' campaigns, development programmes, humanitarian interventions, or the global war on drugs, poverty, and terror. In parts of the world that lack the social basis and stable institutions necessary to develop a liberal programme of their own, governmentality applies neither as an explanatory theory nor as a political practice.[30] It fails or 'reverts back to something more basic' – what Foucault calls 'disciplinary power' or imperialism.[31] Governmentality 'applies to these cases only insofar as it does not apply, in which case concepts like "contragovernmentality" should provide an explanation of why this should be the case'.[32]

> The concept of governmentality does not necessarily bring anything new to an analysis of lawlessness in Sierra Leone, the displacement of populations by war or the role of guerilla movements and village chiefs.[33]

> [C]an the idea that power is exercised over 'free' subjects really be applied to Afghanistan? Do we find in sub-Saharan Africa the exercise of power through free and autonomous individuals? Can the rationality and ethos of liberalism really be applied to the Middle East?[34]

Joseph proposes two solutions to this problem. Either we say that governmentality 'applies to places like the EU, but not to places like sub-Saharan Africa', in

[25] Saskia Sassen, 'Territory and Territoriality in the Global Economy', *International Sociology*, 15:2 (2000), pp. 372–93; We find this duality both in International Relations, where a split between domestic politics (as open to democracy, liberty, and prosperity) and international affairs (as inherently belligerent and uncertain) sustains the fiction of sovereign power, as shown by R. B. J. Walker in *Inside/Outside*, and in Globalisation Studies, where the state is viewed as a precarious entity constantly threatened by accelerating global processes.

[26] Stephen Collier, 'Topologies of Power: Foucault's Analysis of Political Government beyond "Governmentality"', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26:6 (2009), p. 97; Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality'; Chandler, 'Globalising Foucault'.

[27] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 225.

[28] Selby, 'Engaging Foucault', p. 339; Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 225.

[29] Joseph, 'Governmentality of What?', p. 427.

[30] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', pp. 237–8; Joseph, 'What Can Governmentality Do for IR?', p. 203.

[31] Joseph, 'Governmentality of What', p. 427; Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 225.

[32] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 236.

[33] Ibid., p. 236.

[34] Ibid., p. 242.

which case the concept is limited spatially. Or we say that the EU can be governmentalised much easier than sub-Saharan Africa where the socioeconomic and institutional conditions present a greater challenge, in which case we need to look at the state forms and capabilities that determine when and how governmentality is effective.[35] Either way, what is needed is a much more empirically rigorous investigation of the conditions and structures under which the management of populations and states becomes effective. If we omit the structural, historical, and institutional conditions that make governmentality possible in certain locales but not others, the concept risks being generalised or exaggerated beyond the point of explanatory utility.[36]

Foucauldian scholars in IR are very much aware of this danger. They know that we do not inhabit a smooth and homogenous global space and that we must be careful not to overstate the effects of global governmentality or the term may become misleading and vacuous.[37] Still, we have very little grasp of 'just how variable across the world bio-political administrative systems really are (or how much the practices of government and the constitution of subjects differ between, say, New York and New Guinea), or even more important, of why these differences exist'.[38] In part this can be attributed to the fact that Foucauldian approaches 'have a tendency to focus much on the mentality aspect', on discursive rationalities, programmes, and technologies of power rather than on their material foundations.[39] There is a long-standing tradition in Foucauldian studies to treat governmentality as a form of thinking or *mentalité* about how to make social reality knowable and manageable.[40] Another reason is that, so far, governmentality studies, whether dealing with security, insurance, accounting, crime, health, or international affairs (the European Union, international organisations, global civil society), have tended to focus preponderantly on 'successful' cases rather than obstacles to governmentalisation. The assumption here is that the governed are already docile or enthusiastic enough to conform to the regulatory injunctions of liberal rule.[41] As such, Joseph's call for greater conceptual and empirical specification of 'where governmentality can be applied [and] ... what sort of governmentality is being applied'[42] should be taken seriously if only to pre-empt reified images of global power, on the one hand, and premature celebrations of global community, on the other.

[35] Ibid., p. 239.
[36] Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism?', p. 97; Jonathan Joseph, 'What Can Governmentality Do for IR?', *International Political Sociology*, 2:4 (2010b), p. 203; Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 241.
[37] Larner and Williams, 'Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces', in W. Larner and W. Walters (eds), *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 5.
[38] Selby, 'Engaging Foucault', p. 336.
[39] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 241.
[40] Collier, 'Topologies of Power', p. 96; see Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction', in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 1–52; Nikolas Rose, 'Governing "Advanced" Liberal Democracies', in A. Barry, T. Osborne, and N. Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 37–64; Thomas Lemke, '"The Birth of Bio-Politics": Michel Foucault's Lecture at the College de France on Neo-liberal Governmentality', *Economy and Society*, 3:2 (2001), pp. 190–207.
[41] Merlingen, 'Monster Studies', p. 190f.
[42] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 235.

> [D]o not try and make [governmentality] do too much. Distinguish clearly how it works. Explain its limits and how it intersects with other processes … [E]xplain how governmentality connects with sovereignty and disciplinary power and how governmentality is to be distinguished from the more general working of biopower.[43]

What is more, Joseph's intervention dovetails nicely with calls made in other disciplines to ground the otherwise disembodied and agent-less grammar of governmentality in empirical research. In anthropology[44] and sociology,[45] for instance, the preferred solution has been to advocate for ethnographic inquiries into the micropolitics of everyday life. Where I part ways with Joseph is his limited understanding of how global liberalism functions.

Liberalism can indeed distinguish between the management of advanced liberal and peripheral nations. Governance through freedom might apply in one case, while imperial tactics may be required in another. Just because Foucault cut off the king's head does not mean that liberal rule is carried out only by cultivating the 'habits of self-governance'.[46] It can also take the form of naked police, military intervention, sanctions, and coercion.[47] Where Joseph errs is to downplay the relation between imperial intervention and liberalism, when it has been clearly demonstrated that the primary goal of the former is to 'extend European rule and social institutions to the rest of the world' and produce 'market democracies' strongly indebted and embedded in liberal ideals of development and modernisation.[48] This project of 'liberal ordering' has discursive, institutional, and coercive manifestations. It makes use of less conspicuous self-government or *laissez-faire* tactics as well as more overt strategies like military intervention. The task of global governmentality scholarship, which many have already assumed,[49] is not to draw a map of all the places where liberalism works and those where it does not, as Joseph's statist ontology demands, but rather to show how the various strategies of liberal rule, while they may occupy different points on the sovereignty-discipline-government continuum,[50] are assembled together into what Foucault called a 'system of correlation'.[51] The fact that many global politics students still equate liberalism with liberal democracy and refuse to recognise the links between liberalism, global capitalism, and imperialism, has a lot to do with the state-centric models of explanation that continue to dominate the discipline. When we fix state, society, and territory into a sovereign model we empty the explanatory power of the social conditions and political processes that allow states to exist but which also transcend and/or transform the state container. What is an even greater cause for concern, however, is that Selby and Joseph's Marxist orientation does not correct this blindfold. Any

[43] Joseph, 'What Can Governmentality Do for IR?', p. 203.
[44] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 3–4; Collier, 'Topologies of Power', pp. 98–100.
[45] Nikolas Rose, 'Power in Therapy: Techne and Ethos', Academy for the Study of the Psychoanalytic Arts, available at: {http://www.academyanalyticarts.org/rose2.htm}.
[46] Nicholas J. Kiersey, 'World State or Global Governmentality? Constitutive Power and Resistance in a Post-Imperial World', *Global Change, Peace & Society*, 20:3 (2008), p. 370.
[47] Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, 'The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force and Globalization', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:4 (1999), pp. 421–2.
[48] Ibid., p. 421.
[49] Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*; Larner and Walters, 'Global Governmentality'; Walters and Haahr, 'Governmentality and Political Studies'; Stephen Collier and Aihwa Ong (eds), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).
[50] Joseph, 'Governmentality of What', p. 416.
[51] Collier, 'Topologies of Power', p. 89.

Marxist should know that capitalism has always used illiberal means (slavery, colonialism, land-grabs, and other more contemporary forms of accumulation by dispossession) to justify liberal ends of civilising, modernising, and bettering its others.[52] Imperialism and liberalism have never been far off from each other despite the latter's rhetorical commitment to democracy and justice. Joseph and Selby, however, ignore this historical evidence, which leads me to believe that their 'Marxist social ontology'[53] is more of a statist ontology in disguise than a distinct political conviction. If Marxists usually take issue with post-structural theory for glossing over capitalist violence, objective class interests and political utopia,[54] Joseph and Selby's invoke structural inequality not out of some Marxist purism, but to justify IR business as usual and make sure Foucauldian approaches 'abide by rules of disciplinary utility'.[55] Talk of global 'unevenness', in this context, only helps reinforce the idea of a world made up of discreet territorial units, each with its own clear geopolitical interests, strategic positions, and material strengths and weaknesses, but does nothing to contribute to an explicitly Marxist political vision.

A final point of critique argues that Foucauldian scholars exaggerate the triumph of liberalism neglecting, on the one hand, the continued persistence of inter-state anarchy and competition in international affairs[56] and, on the other, the crisis of political representation that plagues the liberal project on a domestic level.[57] According to both Joseph and Chandler, scholarship that transcends state-based governance does not accurately capture or outright ignores global political realities, hence making for a liberal turn in IR theory. 'Scaling up' Foucault overstates the unity and the naturalism of the global, robbing us of a conceptual vocabulary to deal with national decision-making processes, structural inequalities, and historical conditions.

For Joseph the issue with global governmentality and its emphasis on liberalism is that it suggests a smooth functioning, consensus-based international order:

> The ironic danger of over-applying the concept of governmentality to IR is to reinforce the ideological claim that we live in a liberal international order. Given that governmentality is intimately connected to liberalism (or, in today's specific form, neoliberalism), IR theories of governmentality tend to take for granted the spread of (neo)liberalism through international institutions. In reality we have suggested that the international order is far from liberal and far from being liberalized, despite the best of efforts of neoliberals to speak or act as if it were.[58]

Rather than focus on instances of cooperation, rule-making, and network action, governmentality scholars would be better advised to study the contexts in which the liberal ideal cannot be realised because of certain unlawful, illiberal, or violent

[52] Couze Venn, 'Neoliberal Political Economy, Biopolitics and Colonialism: A Transcolonial Genealogy of Inequality', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26:6 (2009), pp. 206–33; Agathangelou, 'Bodies of Desire'; Pasha, 'In the Shadows of Globalization'.

[53] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 225.

[54] See Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Daniel McGee, 'Post-Marxism: The Opiate of the Intellectuals', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 58:2 (1997), pp. 201–25; Timothy Brennan, 'The Empire's New Clothes', *Critical Inquiry*, 29 (2005), pp. 337–67.

[55] Francois Debrix, 'We Other IR Foucauldians', *International Political Sociology*, 2:4 (2010), p. 197.

[56] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 230.

[57] Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism?'; Chandler, 'Globalizing Foucault'.

[58] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality', p. 242.

states as well as the general competitive and hierarchical nature of world politics. For Chandler, the weakness of the liberal internationalist dream come from elsewhere, not from the inherently anarchic character of International Relations, but from the failures of national politics. Contemporary Foucauldian approaches, Chandler argues, assume we live in a global (post-national, post-sovereign) order marked by the ever-expanding forcefulness of the liberal way of rule, when in fact liberalism is clearly losing ground. Late modernity has brought on a crisis of political representation which caused many people to retreat from political life and become apathetic, hyper-individualistic creatures. Levels of political participation are at an all-time low, making it impossible for national governments to forge a shared sense of political destiny.[59] The 'hollowing out' of territorial politics renders the liberal project, especially on a global level, more improbable, not more potent as global governmentality scholars like to suggest.[60] Our task, as IR scholars, should be to solve the liberal crisis of representation, not to exacerbate it by shifting power from the national to the global level, thus letting the nation-state and its citizenry become little more than handmaidens of free-floating global forces.[61]

The implication here seems to be that Foucauldian scholars suffer from the same *naivité* idealists and cosmopolitans did before them: (global) liberalism may be desirable, only political reality is far too brutal and uncertain to allow this dream to become reality. But this is where the critics are mistaken: *when Foucaudians invoke 'liberalism' it is always as a critique, never as an aspiration.*[62] Global liberalism, Foucauldians and other feminist, post-colonial and Marxian scholars argue, is not about less wars and more democratic states, as liberal peace theory suggests, but requires more foreign interventions, greater surveillance, and more intimate technologies of discipline and punish. Global liberalism represents a general loss in human autonomy and self-determination especially in the case of the Global South where liberalism can only succeed through a blatant violation of indigenous forms of life and knowledge. We are dealing here with a conceptual confusion (or maybe even a political disagreement) about the meaning of liberalism: while the nature of political liberalism, with its emphasis on rights, representation, and legitimacy, may be under attack (some might argue that the 'anxiety about the groundlessness of all politics, all forms of community' is foundational to the liberal-Enlightenment tradition),[63] what makes the world go round, global governmentality scholars argue, is a different type of liberalism – one inspired by neoliberal economic principles.[64] This is a form of liberalism which, despite not having a global reach, harbours a universal ambition.

Foucault's liberalism

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of liberalism: a liberalism consumed with the origins and legitimacy of power, what we now call 'political liberalism', and

[59] Chandler, 'Globalising Foucault'.
[60] Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism?'
[61] Kiersey et al., 'Response to Chandler', p. 144.
[62] Foucault's own political view of liberalism is more complicated. The next section discusses this in greater detail.
[63] Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination*, p. 102.
[64] Nicholas J. Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy and the Subjectivity of Crisis: Governmentality is Not Hollow', *Global Society*, 23:4 (2009), p. 363.

an 'economic liberalism' which takes the existence of government as given and is more preoccupied with procedural and administrative considerations. While liberals like Kant, Hobbes, and Rousseau are more concerned with establishing the legitimacy of power by setting up a correspondence between law and popular will, the state and the people, sovereignty and subjectivity, economic liberals like Hume, Smith, Ricardo, and James and Stuart Mill are more interested in how to limit power to increase the utility of personal and societal affairs. 'Because economic liberalism attaches no special importance to the question of power's origin (unlike the revolutionary or natural-rights tradition), it effectively dispenses with the need for juridical foundations'[65] to devote more attention to the ways in which power can be mobilised (and limited) for the 'betterment of the population'.[66] For economic liberalism there can be no better internal limitation to sovereign power and guide to human betterment than the market. Seen as a naturally given, automatically functioning meeting ground for people to satisfy their interests and resolve their passions, the market becomes the principle in the name of which government should be organised and assessed.[67] As Scott Nelson recently observed, in International Relations the liberal imagination is limited to the former school of thought. The liberal Enlightenment tradition wilfully ignores the writings of classic political economists or banishes them to the subfield of International Political Economy,[68] thus solidifying the notion that political power has virtually remained static since the Westphalian moment.[69] Foucault's concept of governmentality challenges this view.

Governmentality, it is important to remember, is not just a concept Foucault invented to cut off the king's head. While the term did help Foucault dispense with juridical, purely territorial models of power in favour of a more temporal process concerned with the management and ordering of social life, its significance reaches well beyond Foucault's own research agenda. Governmentality is also shorthand for the historical transformation of modern power from the Middle Ages to the present, from sovereign rule to disciplinary power and, finally, to biopolitics. Beginning with the eighteenth century the concern of power changed to 'redirect the energies of government from the control of territorial sovereignty to the management of populations and things'.[70] The ambition was less to 'insur[e] the obedience of citizen-subjects and the security of a territory [than to effect] the correct disposition, administration and distribution of things', populations and subjectivities.[71] Governmentality, then, becomes a statement about the shift in liberalism over the past couple of centuries from a political project concerned with the order, stability and peacefulness of a territorially bounded polity to an economic regime of power that designates the market as the measure of effective government and social improvement. The two are not entirely divorced. The political principles of liberalism (individual rights, rule of law, and liberty of expression)

[65] Michael C. Behrent, 'Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976–1979', *Modern Intellectual History*, 6:3 (2009), p. 562.
[66] Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination*, p. 109.
[67] Tiziana Terranova, 'Another Life. The Nature of Political Economy in Foucault's Genealogy of Biopolitics', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26:6 (2009), p. 237.
[68] See David L. Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah, *Savage Economics: Wealth, Poverty and the Temporal Walls of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
[69] Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination*, p. 103.
[70] Ibid., p. 104, emphasis in original.
[71] Ibid., p. 105, emphasis in original.

remain necessary for a functioning market economy organised around private property, competition, and entrepreneurship. Still, political economy becomes the guiding principle of modern government. If some voices in the discipline take issue with the conceptual and methodological applications of governmentality, the historical evidence is much harder to refute, especially after Foucault devoted two lecture series to tracing the genealogical roots of economic liberalism and showing this to be the paradigmatic mode for governing the present.

In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault focused on the latest incarnation of this development: neoliberalism. He defined it as a style of government developed in the 1930s by German Ordoliberal economists and later on modified by the Chicago school of economics that takes the market as the guiding principle for all human action. Having suffered the repercussions of *laissez-faire* economic policies, post-war Ordoliberals and American neoliberals were hesitant to let the market function freely, steered only by individual interests and passions. This so-called 'naïve naturalism' was said to have been responsible for the economic failure of the Weimar Republic and the subsequent rise of Nazi Germany. For the market to act as the organising principle for both state and society, an ambition which was integral to post-war reconstruction efforts, the market had to be carefully orchestrated and embedded in appropriate forms of policy and sociality. This is not to say that government should correct the destructive effects of the market, as recommended by Keynesian politics. More accurately, government should intervene *in society* to produce the types of subjects and social relations a market economy needs.[72] This is what Foucault referred to as biopolitics and the German Ordoliberals before him called *Gesellschaftspolitik* (societal politics): a type of power that intervenes in the lives of the population to promote social and moral orders conducive to entrepreneurial conduct, create a society that can thrive with only limited government intervention, and disseminate the necessary rights and freedoms for individuals to give their lives an entrepreneurial shape. No wonder, then, that Foucault considered subjectivity to be the primordial locus of government. For governmentality to be effective it had to first be *affective*:[73] it had to cultivate certain modes of conduct, dispositions, and values that would allow government to function smoothly with the voluntary, even enthusiastic participation of the population.

In his typical non-normative, anti-humanist fashion Foucault refrained from making any overt judgments about the desirability or the dangers of neoliberalism in his work. It was up to his epigones to take a critical stance to economic liberalism mainly because they lived to see the destructive effects neoliberalism has when taken to its full conclusion. Neoliberalism did not remain fixed in the benign formulation of Ordoliberals. When it crossed the Atlantic it was modified by the Reagan, Thatcher, and Pinochet regimes and, then, a generation later, by third way democrats like Clinton, Blair, and Schröder to introduce privatisation, deregulation, and wide-spread precarisation. This is why Foucauldians in sociology,[74]

[72] Foucault, *The Birth the Biopolitics*, pp. 117–20.

[73] I borrow the phrase from William Mazzarella, 'Affect: What Is It Good For?', in Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization* (London: Routledge), p. 299.

[74] Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (University of Chicago Press, 1991); Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

political theory,[75] and a host of other disciplines[76] have adopted a critical view of economic liberalism, especially of the governmental techniques and strategies used to bring our social lives and individual conduct in line with market logics in such subtle, almost benevolent ways that it renders resistance futile. Some even went so far as to use Foucault's concepts of governmentality and biopower to launch Marxian critiques of global capital and empire.[77] Even in international studies there are global governmentality scholars who have found Foucault's definition of neoliberalism to have more in common with the Marxist understanding of the term, where liberalism is a technique for spreading capitalist relations across the globe, than with the liberalism of political theory, global governance, or critical security studies, Chandler, and Joseph are referring to.[78]

In reality, however, Foucault had a much more complicated relation to economic liberalism than his followers (myself included) have been led to believe. In a recent article Michael Behrent revealed that, towards the end of his life, Foucault, like many other former French radicals post-1968, strategically endorsed economic liberalism as a way to find 'left-wing alternatives to "social statism"'.[79] Foucault believed that economic liberalism, with its anti-humanism, utilitarianism, and suspicion of concentrated power, could help the revolutionary Left make the jump from ideology to governmentality, in other words, be less concerned with the origins and authenticity of power than with how to use power to optimise human life.[80] It is not that Foucault was a fan of Reagan and Thatcher's neoliberal reforms, only that he recognised in the liberal art of government certain philosophical dispositions which he thought the French Left, particularly the Socialist Party, would do well to learn from if it wanted to advance a successful political programme.[81]

[75] Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Jason Read, 'A Genealogy of *Homo Economicus*: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity', *Foucault Studies*, 6 (2009), pp. 25–36.

[76] Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo (eds), *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopower and Discipline in the New Millennium* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

[77] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.

[78] In particular, Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', and Jason Weidner, 'Governmentality, Capitalism and Subjectivity', *Global Society*, 23:4 (2009), pp. 387–411.

[79] Behrent, 'Liberalism without Humanism', p. 554.

[80] Ibid., pp. 564–5.

[81] It is important here to make a clear distinction between neoliberalism, which Foucault could not have had any sympathies for given his strong connections to the French Left and the liberal art of government, which Foucault might indeed have been attracted to given the failures of the institutional Left to put forth a credible political vision around 1968. After May 1968 many on the French Left accused the Socialist Party and trade unions of having betrayed the wider aspirations of the Left by entering an unholy alliance with the governing forces led by de Gaulle. From this perspective, liberal governmentality could indeed teach the Left a thing or two about how to effectively govern in the name of human betterment without turning to totalitarianism or violating individual autonomy. It is the method, not the principles of liberal governmentality that Foucault would have wanted the Left to learn from. Further proof for the fact that Foucault could not have been a supporter of neoliberalism (a proposition Behrent is careful to avoid) can be found in various recent publications trying to make sense of Foucault's complicated yet sympathetic relation with Marxism: Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History* (Oxford, MA: Polity Press, 1984); Richard Marsden, *The Nature of Capital: Marx After Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Bradley J. Macdonald, 'Marx, Foucault, Genealogy', *Polity*, 34:3 (2002), pp. 259–84; Mark Olssen, 'Foucault and Marxism: Rewriting the Theory of Historical Materialism', *Policy Futures in Education*, 2:3–4 (2002), pp. 454–82; Jason Read, 'A Fugitive Thread: The Production of Subjectivity in Marx,' *Pli*, 13 (2002), pp. 124–44.

Foucauldian scholarship has not yet considered these discoveries and one could certainly wonder to what extent Foucault's own political convictions still matter after 'the death of the author'. Foucauldians should take seriously, if not Foucault's personal politics, then at least his theoretical justifications for endorsing the method of economic liberalism: Foucault saw his theories avenged in the triumph of economic liberalism because it demonstrated that the paradigmatic mode of modern power was not discipline, which is directed at individuals, but biopower, the purpose of which is the management of populations.[82] It further showed that if liberalism is an effective model for improving the lives of the populace, it is because biopolitics is a more productive, even benevolent form of power than usually assumed.[83] Biopower is less concerned with disallowing life than with bettering it, which in economic liberalism means synchronising human affairs with market relations. Beginning with the eighteenth century, '[a]s a greater share of humans activities were given over to economic relationships, human betterment began to eclipse the rule of law as the raison d'etre of government.'[84] In international affairs this prioritisation of prosperity over security may seem imprudent, even to scholars sympathetic to Foucault, because the international is not considered to have a notion of the good life. This has led not only sceptics but also scholars working with Foucault to miss out on the heterogeneity of bipower.

In International Relations biopower is most often read through Agamben, who turns Foucault's concept into something exclusively violent. Following Agamben, biopower is said to generalise the 'state of exception' to the point where denigrating life becomes the original activity of modern institutions[85] and, indeed, a political inevitability inscribed in the structure of liberal democratic politics.[86] Particularly critical security and border studies are eager to understand how biopolitics subsumes human life to the strategic calculations of power in ways that transgress the limits of legitimate rule into the terrain of emergency and exceptionality.[87] The

[82] Behrent, 'Liberalism without Humanism', p. 558.

[83] It should be remembered that Foucault never had a chance to fully elaborate his thoughts on biopolitics. While *The Birth of Biopolitics* was intended to fill that gap, Foucault spent most of the lecture series exploring the 'condition of intelligibility' for biopolitics, that is, liberal government. He apologises for this digression but ultimately leaves the conceptualisation of biopolitics up to the generations to come.

[84] Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination*, p. 107.

[85] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

[86] Neal, 'Goodbye War on Terror', p. 45.

[87] See Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, 'Global Liberal Governance: Biopolitics, Security and War', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 20:1 (2001), pp. 41–66; Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Michael Shapiro, Jenny Edkins, and Veronique Pin-Fat (eds), *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Vivienne Jabri, 'War, Security and the Liberal State', *Security Dialogue*, 37 (2006), pp. 47–64; Julien Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life Struggles, Liberal Modernity and the Defence of Logistical Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Michael Dillon, 'Governing Terror: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence', *International Political Sociology*, 1 (2007), pp. 7–28; Elizabeth Dauphinee and Christina Masters (eds), *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Mark Salter, *Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Mark Salter (ed.), *Politics at the Airport* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Michael Dillon and Andrew W. Neal (eds), *Foucault on Politics, Security and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Miguel De Larrinaga and Marc Doucet, 'Sovereign Power and the Biopolitics of Security', *Security Dialogue*, 39:5 (2008), pp. 517–37.
Exceptions include, to name but a few, the work of Didier Bigo, William Walters, Peter Nyers, Andrew Lakoff, and Stephen Collier.

fields of study are more interested in how the liberal way of rule 'kill[s] to make life live'[88] than in how it uses capitalist principles to give expression to life's highest ambitions. This reading of Foucault has come in handy for post-9/11 IR theory, in particular with regards to the war on terror, exceptional incarceration and interrogation tactics, and the rise of digital and biometric surveillance and securitisation strategies. But it is a partial interpretation which refuses to distinguish between governmental programmes that 'protect life and [those that] authorize a holocaust'.[89] What is worse, it has led to a hyperbolic image of liberalism which treats 'the securitizing logic of biopolitics [as a] globe-spanning regime of liberally imagined life'.[90] This promotes a somewhat hasty conclusion that exceptions and emergencies are unavoidable faults of liberal democracy. Here, Selby and Chandler's fear that Foucauldian approaches in IR might 'efface the state or sovereign as political subjects, collapsing them into the rationalities of global power' is not too far off the mark.[91] When we do not pay attention to the heterogeneity of biopower we end up 'reif[ying] exceptionalism as a structural inevitability' and presenting the liberal way of rule (and war) as an all-encompassing force that lies outside the bounds of political decision-making.[92]

Yet the same is not true of all global governmentality studies. There is a growing body of literature that promises to explore a dimension of biopolitics that is often ignored in critical security approaches, namely, the ambition of modern power to administer, regulate, and, ultimately, optimise the human body and the body politic as a whole.[93] As Mitchell Dean explains, if biopower

> is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population [, it] must then also concern the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy and die. From this perspective, bio-politics is concerned with the family, with housing, living and working conditions, with what we call 'lifestyle', with public health issues, patterns of migration, levels of economic growth and standards of living. It is concerned with the bio-sphere in which humans dwell.[94]

Biopower, then, can also 'exert a positive influence upon life', not only to reduce it to a worthless category. Particularly in the mundane and 'uneventful' facets of international politics, such as finance, education, housing, production, consumption, urban planning, architecture, and ecology we come to recognise the liberal ambition to produce and organise the space *between* birth and death according to market principles.

[88] Dillon and Reid, *The Liberal Way of War*.
[89] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 3.
[90] Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 368.
[91] Chandler, 'Globalising Foucault', p. 139.
[92] Neal, 'Goodbye War on Terror?', p. 46.
[93] Foucault cited in Kiersey and Weidner, 'Editorial Introduction', p. 345. See also Wendy Larner and Walter Williams, 'Global Governmentality'; William Walters and Henrik Haahr, 'Governmentality and Political Studies', *European Political Science*, 4 (2005), pp. 288–300; Nicholas J. Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy'; Jason Weidner, 'Governmentality, Capitalism and Subjectivity'; Marieke De Goede (ed.), *International Political Economy and Poststructural Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Paul Langley, *The Everyday Life of Global Finance: Saving and Borrowing in Anglo-America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Debbie Lisle, 'Joyless Cosmopolitans: The Moral Economy of Ethical Tourism', in J. Best and M. Peterson (eds), *Cultural Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 139–58; Phoebe Moore, *The International Political Economy of Work and Employability* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).
[94] Dean cited in Selby, 'Engaging Foucault', p. 333.

This does not mean that the world is governed exclusively through market principles or that the *homo oeconomicus* model of action is ubiquitous. To quote Kiersey, 'global neoliberal government ... does not, and cannot, work on a truly global population'.[95] For now, at least, the liberal ideal seems to describe best the condition of advanced industrial nations or select urban conglomerations and high-value production sites across the globe. At the same time, however, this does not undercut the hegemony of the liberal programme, which is a universal *tendency* rather than a global actuality.[96] Global governmentality manifests its force not through the actual number of people or states it controls, but by acting as a standard of reference against which all forms of life (individual, communal, political) can be assessed according to modern conceptions of civilisation and order. Those individuals who possess the skill, talent, market value, and entrepreneurial spirit to respond opportunistically to the demands of capital will enjoy greater access to job markets, housing options, residence permits, and cultural goods around the world. Similarly, those states that can abide by to the dictums of good governance, fiscal responsibility, and foreign security will receive better credit ratings, lending agreements, and international support. Those who fail to conform will become second-order citizens, confined to slums and ghettos, doomed to perform low-skilled and tedious jobs, or perpetually developing states stuck in a tight spot between foreign intervention and humanitarian assistance. As Agathangelou *et al.* aptly put it:

> On the one hand, there are those for whom subjectivity, capital, and satiating pleasures and rights are being forever promised. This occurs ... at the expense of compliance with, or perhaps distraction from, the larger structural underpinnings of social relations and processes. On the other hand, there are the (non)subjects for whom the same promise has not been issued, the abject(s) whose lives and deaths are completely nonspectacular within the dominant imaginations.[97]

Global liberalism is not a global reality, as Joseph, Selby, and Chandler already note, but a quite selective and stratified 'field of possibilities',[98] which nonetheless harbours a distinct universal ambition. If New Guinea or, for that matter, Arkansas are excluded from or fail to conform to liberalism, that doesn't mean that they exist 'outside' the liberal project. It is precisely because liberalism functions as a universal measure of truth that we can understand the exclusion or failure of certain communities and spaces.

We see here that the burgeoning body of literature on 'neoliberal *economic* governmentality'[99] offers fresh approaches to global politics that are much more attuned to the current realities of capitalism, globalisation, and empire than a purely state-centric ontology or exclusively violent readings of the global. This interest in the benign and benevolent aspects of biopower may have led Foucault to extend too much support to liberalism. With global governmentality studies I should hope this focus will translate into more grounded and responsible critiques of global capital.

[95] Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 385.
[96] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).
[97] Anna M. Agathangelou, Daniel M. Bassichis, and Tamara L. Spira, 'Intimate Investments: Homonormativity, Global Lockdown, and the Seductions of Empire', *Radical History Review*, 100 (2008), p. 137.
[98] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', p. 341.
[99] Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 367, emphasis added.

Doing IR research with Foucault

In this final section, I would like to enumerate three distinct advantages global governmentality studies can offer to international studies: it can repopulate IR by showing the importance of everyday practice and the centrality of subjectivity to global power relations; promote the study of varied and contested manifestations of 'actually existing liberalism'; and encourage a more historically sensitive view of global liberalism. Together these contributions have the power to advance a more empirically grounded and politically engaged research agenda in International Relations. They reflect my own views of what IR should be about and whom it should be written for and do not exhaust the promise of either global governmentality studies or IR scholarship. The list can be expanded depending on research interests and political affinities.

First of all, global governmentality studies have the potential to break with the discipline's state-centric understanding of power and its radically dehumanised picture of the international. If we take Foucault's call seriously and follow power relations like a detective would follow an elusive target, we inevitably end up at subjectivity. Cutting off the king's head was only the first of Foucault's ambitions. The next logical step was to ask 'How is it possible that his headless body behaves as if it indeed has a head?'[100] To answer this question we need to recognise the subjective condition 'as the locus where the social link is forged',[101] the place where power relations are either subscribed to or shaken off, where techniques of individuation either converge or diverge with technologies of domination. This preoccupation with the microphysics of power does not have to reduce politics to a purely aesthetic field that refuses to engage with or make demands upon the state. The subjective condition has multiple uses for IR: it can be used in the *individualising* sense to look at how political subjects either solidify or reverse relations of power through their everyday actions; in the *totalising* sense of populations that become subjects of biopolitical interventions; in the *technical* sense of experts and epistemic communities that render the world thinkable through their reports, research, and policy recommendations; or in the *historical* sense as sedimented mentalities of knowing and doing that spill over into the present. In all of these contexts, capillary power is able to trace the intimate relation between subjectivation and state-formation, between the production free and autonomous individual and the spread of liberal ideals.

The advantage of an approach centered on the subjective condition is that it can 'strip political rule of its self-evident, normal or natural character, which is essential for its operation'.[102] In showing that global politics is not only constitutive of our everyday lives, but also a product of it, governmentality approaches break with the discipline's state-centric understanding of power and its radically dehumanised picture of the international. This represents both an 'ontopolitical critique'[103] of rationalist models that anthropomorphise inanimate structures to give us a (static)

[100] Thomas Lemke, 'Foucault's Hypothesis: From the Critique of the Juridico-Discursive Concept of Power to an Analytics of Government', *Parrhesia*, 9 (2010), pp. 33–4.
[101] M. Yahya Madra and Ceren Özselcuk, '*Juissance* and Antagonism in the Forms of the Commune: A Critique of Biopolitical Subjectivity', *Rethinking Marxism*, 22:3 (2010), p. 482.
[102] Merlingen, 'Foucault and World Politics', p. 188.
[103] William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1995).

picture of political action, and a corrective to post-structuralist theories which produce a purely discursive analysis of power. It has always been the discipline's tradition to filter human life either through the voices and actions of official figures or through the interests of state institutions.[104] As Davies and Niemann explain, IR theory mystifies and obscures the reality of global affairs 'behind a veil, which designates the practice of IR as the exclusive domain of experts, statesmen, diplomats and, more recently, the chieftains of global business'.[105] Even if critical IR made an effort to include the voices of women, indigenous people and formerly colonised subjects in the conversation, it has done so only to the extent that their testimonies could illuminate the discipline's already established areas of interest – war, domination, and subjection.[106] Meanwhile, the political dimension of everyday life, in all its mundane and humble facets, has remained largely within the scope of sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Global governmentality, with its focus on how power is dispersed, exercised, and experienced in everyday life,[107] has the potential to repopulate the discipline and return it to the promise contained in its title, namely, the study of international *social* relations in all their richness and randomness.[108]

Second, global governmentality studies can help develop more empirically grounded research of actually existing liberalism. Critics of governmentality studies are right to demand greater specification on the conditions and structures that allow the liberal ideal to become effective in some parts of the world and strained in others. There is still a lot of translation work to be done before we can apply the concept of governmentality to global politics in a way that does not 'elide the particulars of globalization'[109] or present liberal power as a universal constant. This is a particularly tricky task since globality does not have a concrete spatial ontology (a postal address). It is not an all-encompassing, homogenous blanket that stretches the entire world over, but rather a plethora of intersecting, heterogeneous, and transient practices that cut across borders, both spatial and conceptual. Terms such as 'global' or 'international' are ideal types that describe a site of intervention or a problem to be solved as well as the sum of tools and strategies used to accomplish that intervention, 'useful only to the extent that we keep in mind their nature as virtual potentials'.[110] The goal should not be to determine why certain states are suitable to liberal rule while others lag behind, as Joseph demands.[111] Instead, global governmentality studies need to explore the strategies and technologies used to reaffirm the liberal project as a universal, albeit spatially varied and contested, standard of reference. In other words, the goal should be to study 'actually existing liberalism'.

[104] Vivienne Jabri, 'Restyling the Subject of Responsibility in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27:3 (1998), p. 594.
[105] Matt Davies and Michael Niemann, 'The Everyday Spaces of Global Politics: Work, Leisure, Family', *New Political Science,* 24:4 (2002), p. 561.
[106] Sheila Nair and Geeta Chowdhry. *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations* (New York, Routledge: 2002); Jenny Edkins, Veronique Pin-Fat, and Michael J. Shapiro (eds), *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds* (New York: Routledge., 2009).
[107] Larner and Williams, 'Global Governmentality', p. 4.
[108] Davies and Niemann, 'The Everyday Spaces of Global Politics', p. 567.
[109] Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 376.
[110] Ibid., p. 386.
[111] Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality'.

The term 'actually existing *neo*liberalism' was coined by Marxist geographers Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore to 'underscore the profound disjuncture between orthodox neoliberal ideology and the complex, contested, and uneven geographies of regulatory change that have emerged in and through projects of neoliberalization'.[112] Infused with a deep spatial sensibility reminiscent of the Marxist concept of 'uneven development', the term is cognisant of the gap that exists between the discourse of (neo-)liberalism and its spatially selective and diverse application. It is also a call to arms for scholars from all disciplines to devote more attention to the empirical, contextual, and local applications of global liberalism 'on the ground'. Answering this call could help Foucauldian scholars avoid treating governmentality as a universal constant impervious to empirical investigation while, at the same time, remain loyal to Foucault's own view of method. As already mentioned above, Foucault always insisted that we abandon *a priori* ontological categories and follow the research question wherever it may take us by means of archival, archaeological or genealogical methods. This type of non-positivist empiricism is '"devoted only to the subject," and let[s] the analysis play out in surprising ways'[113] regardless of methodological purity or disciplinary loyalty.

Finally, Foucauldian approaches can offer a more comprehensive history of global liberalism. Historically, the rise of the liberal doctrine has been inextricably linked to the genealogy of Western modernity as it spread through technological developments, trade, and economic networks, colonial and neo-colonial violences, and other 'apparatuses of capture'.[114] The ambition to destroy or convert all forms of life that exist outside the limits of capital or, conversely, to spread the necessary types of subjects and social relations to support this ideal persists to this day. The Bush Doctrine, for instance, merged neo-conservatism with liberal internationalism to produce a so-called 'Wilsonianism with teeth' that would expand the dream of liberal capital to spaces left 'vacant' after the demise of the Soviet Union.[115] Similarly, the Washington Consensus, whether in the form of structural adjustment plans or the more recent poverty reduction strategies, extends loans and foreign assistance to developing nations only on the condition that these give up on their indigenous forms of economy and sociality, and align themselves with neoliberal market principles.

Foucault's work and especially his discussion of neoliberalism have been criticised for downplaying the historical conditions central to establishing the hegemony of liberal capital to focus exclusively on the discursive processes of biopolitics within Europe. But it seems to me that the most recent interventions in global governmentality promise to rectify this point.[116] By viewing liberalism as a gendered and racially determined mechanism of power that cannot tolerate an 'Other' but must constantly stretch into space as a technology of colonisation,[117] governmentality approaches can

[112] Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, 'Neoliberalism and the Urban Condition', *City*, 9:1 (2005), p. 103; see also Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, 'Cities and the Geographies of "Actually Existing Neoliberalism"', *Antipode*, 33:3 (2002a), pp. 349–79.

[113] Pattrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Three Stories: A Way of Being in the World', in Naeem Inayatullah (ed.), *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 161.

[114] Venn, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 206; Agathangelou, 'Bodies of Desire', p. 5.

[115] Agathangelou, 'Bodies of Desire'.

[116] See Kiersey and Weidner, 'Editorial Introduction'.

[117] Venn, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 206; Agathangelou, 'Bodies of Desire', p. 15.

'make visible … what the ''invisible hand'' of free market and laissez-faire capitalism hides from view': the tyranny of expert and scientific knowledge, exploitative work conditions, geographical displacements and neo-colonial warfare.[118]

A cautionary conclusion

In light of these generous promises it is ironic that Chandler, Joseph, and Selby accuse global governmentality scholars of treating liberalism as an abstract rootless force divorced from the realities of global politics. It seems to me that it is precisely this later group that is trying to break the political quietism so dismal in a discipline that claims to be interested in global politics by presenting the liberal ideal as something more ambitious and hence more dangerous than just a set of democratic principles and institutional designs.[119] Aside from a brief interlude in historical materialism[120] and world-systems analysis,[121] critiques of liberal capitalism have remained comfortably on the margins of IR. With Joseph, for instance, we cannot even be certain where he stands with regards to liberalism, his professed Marxism notwithstanding. We cannot tell whether he sees it as a desirable goal (his insistence on finding out in what places and under what conditions liberal governmentality works seems to be indicating so) or whether he is purely agnostic about it (which in and of itself is also a political position). If global governmentality studies exaggerate the liberal character of world politics, as Joseph and Chandler claim, it is only because they refer to a different type of liberalism – an economistic variant that hangs on the cusp between Foucauldian theories of power and Marxian critiques of capital. Adopting a more historically sensitive and empirically grounded analysis of global liberalism will hopefully allow IR scholars to become politically vocal in ways that can transcend the boundaries of their discipline and perhaps even profession.

This being said, however, we should not fool ourselves into thinking that Foucault can help us refurbish the disciplinary vestiges of International Relations. The recurrent question, What can Foucault do or what has he already done to IR?, posed by supporters and sceptics alike, represents two sides of the same coin. It is, of course, the wrong coin.[122] Sceptics are only prepared to welcome new ideas and concepts into the disciplinary vocabulary as long as these can be made to work within the already existing framework. Their aim is to assess the use-value of Foucauldian approaches while leaving the disciplinary tradition intact. Supporters, on the other hand, rush to point out, as I have done here, the myriad of ways in which Foucault's legacy can invigorate the study of International Relations: place international political *life* in all its quotidian, connected, and conflicted aspects at

[118] Venn, 'Neoliberal Political Economy', p. 211.
[119] Kiersey, 'Neoliberal Political Economy'; Weidner, 'Governmentality, Capitalism and Subjectivity'.
[120] Stephen Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[121] Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[122] I borrow the phrase from Sylvère Lotringer, 'In Theory', Frieze Art Fair. London (14–16 October 2009), available at: {http://www.friezeartfair.com/podcasts/details/in_theory_sylvere_lotringer/} accessed 27 December 2009.

the centre of our research agendas; encourage a hermeneutic understanding of seemingly abstract and removed global affairs and put an end to the discipline's historical amnesia and political quietism. These promises are certainly hopeful but they come with commensurate responsibilities. We cannot expect Foucault to offer us a novel theory of the international when his primary goal would have been to interrogate the ontological force of IR's concepts and fields. As Andrew Neal explains this point lucidly:

> [t]here is some irony in taking a historian who is not a historian and a political theorist who is not a political theorist and trying to rethink him for International Relations (IR) or for the study of relations of capital. It is not possible to do so and remain faithful to those disciplines. To engage with the highly promiscuous thinker that is Foucault is to be unfaithful. It is not possible to engage with Foucault while holding onto even the most rudimentary of disciplinary commitments.[123]

I want to take this call further and argue that it is also not possible to work with Foucault while remaining in the shadows of this thinker. Just like IR scholars have a lot to learn from Foucault's lessons on governmentality, state power and liberalism, Foucauldians also have a responsibility to overcome a group identity that would have surely made their patron saint uncomfortable. A first step in this direction would be to recognise that global governmentality is not an approach or school of thought – it lacks any model of theoretical explication or scientific inquiry to merit this distinction. Rather, it is a style of analysis, a critical stance, an ethos which Foucault referred to as a 'critical ontology of ourselves', 'in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experience with the possibility beyond them'.[124]

[123] Neal, 'Rethinking Foucault', p. 541.
[124] Foucault cited in Lemke, '"The Birth of Bio-Politics"', p. 43.